583 to the sort of concubinage that "free marriage" is, as practiced in Mossi country.

The Situation of the Betrothed Couple during the Engagement

584 Generally speaking, the fiancé is supposed to avoid his betrothed before marriage. They treat each other with a kind of shy reserve.

Aside from the gifts made to the village elders and some cowries given to the future in-laws at the time of his first visit, no further demands are made on the fiancé.

584 The young man is formally forbidden to carry on an intrigue with
684 a woman in the girl's village. If he does so, not only may the engagement be broken, but the lover may never again set foot in the village on paid of death.

Breaking the Engagement

584 When an engagement is broken, the gifts received need not be returned. On the other hand, the death of the girl is not regarded as breaking the engagement; the family must, sooner or later, offer another daughter to the young man to replace the girl who died.

An engagement may be broken [179] automatically in case of adultery, discussed below, or in the event of a quarrel between the two families.

Marriage Between First Cousins

587 Marriage between first cousins is not allowed. There can be no valid union between the children of a brother and sister, between a man and the daughter of either his father's or his mother's brother.

588 However, it sometimes happens -- inadvertently -- that a girl
587 who has been given in marriage in a very distant village may find
751 that her husband is a descendant of a great-grandparent (material or paternal) in the same family as her own. Had this been known, the marriage would not have taken place. Ordinarily, distant relationship is not discovered until long after the marriage, after complicated genealogical research. In that case, one of the pair, usually the wife,

588 582 751 wears a bracelet made of copper and iron intertwined, kalembanga, which is believed to protect the wearer against any disaster due to the technically illegal marriage. The kalembanga is also believed to protect the children born of the union from sudden death.

Polygyny

595 Polygyny is the rule throughout Mossi country. It is true that the number of wives varies with the resources and position of the individual. Mere heads of compounds who are somewhat well off may have [180] from five to eight wives and numerous fiancées. The [584] latter are usually reserved for the dakompa (older sons and younger brothers of the head of the family), assuming that these men will in turn render real service and be completely devoted to the head of the household.

There are many reasons for the practice of polygyny, but the main one is procreation. The under-nourished natives must rely on [853] the mother's milk to feed their babies and must therefore wait two [834] or even three years before resuming sexual relations with a wife who is a nursing mother. Therefore, they prefer to have several wives.

Consummation

585 When the young girl is taken to her husband, she is entrusted to a woman whom she will henceforth treat as "mother."

A few days after the departure of the cortege, whose composition we shall describe presently, the man claims his fiancée. She is taken at night to the nuptial hut, which has no special features, and no one is present at the consummation of the marriage. In this respect the Mossi differ from the Bambara, who have a griot or an old woman accompany the couple to help the young man, if necessary, overcome the girl's resistance.

It goes without saying that if the girl is found to be a virgin, the [181] husband is overjoyed. If she is not a virgin, the love which he may have felt for her before possessing her is much diminished. The man shows the girl his anger, certain that she will at least tell her mother about it.

342 is continued, and the process goes on until the hut is completed, that is, when it reaches a height of about 1.65 meters. The house is built without any openings, but when the walls are up, a [219] low door is put in, having the shape of a pointed arch. The interior of many Mossi houses is divided by a low wall, called kogré, which makes the hut very dark. A few small holes are made with the handle of a daba, and these, with the low door, are [726] the only openings. In time of war, the Moaga used to shoot his arrows through these tiny holes. Before the roof is put on, the [751] walls are daubed with wet ashes, a practice which is supposed to guarantee good health for the new inhabitants.

The roof is conical in shape. It is made with poles which are tightly tied at the top with vines. Stiff mats, zarsé, are placed on the poles. They are held in place with fibers and are covered with braided straw. Some twenty persons are needed to put up the roof. The construction of the house is then finished. Only the plastering remains to be done. For this job, the women collect a special kind of earth, boalga, which they mix with manure from cows or horses and then coat the walls with it. When this operation is completed, the women cover the floor with a ferruginous material that is sprinkled with water and tamped down with bits of flat wood called silpama. After the floor has been smoothed down, the sasgo is the next step. This involves covering the surface with a sticky material, boudou, mixed with ground charcoal. This is rubbed over and over with glass sherds or special stones called sassega. The shiny black surface obtained in this fashion prevents the ferruginous material from soiling the family's clothes. Some [824] people sprinkle the finished floor with kanmé, an infusion made of the skin of the néré fruit, in order to make it wear well.

[220] Construction workers. The master of the house is aided by his own brothers and other relatives in the same clan. He does not request help from outsiders. The women's job is to get the water needed for the mortar.

The earth used in building is taken from a hole near the house, the tan-nako (from tando, "earth," and nako, "hole"). This excavation is later filled with all the waste from the house and ordure from the courtyard. The tan-nako, well fertilized in this manner is planted with maize, and this field is called the kamanga.

753 /66/ This is because illness is usually attributed to an evil spirit,
761 which must not be irked with complaints. Yet in everyday language it is God who is the cause of everything, of health as well as of death. The sorcerers consulted indicate which spirit must be appeased, to whom sacrifices must be offered; or they state quite frankly that the hour of the sick person has come, that his life is over and he is about to rejoin his ancestors, for it is often the latter who call him and come to fetch him. In the case of old men and especially of old women, death is considered a natural event. An old man has many children who will give him a fine funeral, and it is time for him to make way for his eldest son. If a quarrelsome person falls sick, his
[763] illness is often attributed to an evil spell cast by an enemy. When an elder is about to die, those who have caused him offense come to beg his forgiveness and only find peace when they have obtained it, for the old man might return to obtain his revenge. Sudden death is usually ascribed to poison and, alas, this is often the case. Sometimes it is also attributed to an evil spirit, especially in case of accident, fall, snake bite, etc.

755 The instinct of self-preservation is so strong in man that the Mossi
757 although they ascribe a superhuman origin to illness, nevertheless fight it. It is true that all their treatments combine medicinal and superstitious elements to drive off evil spirits, and whatever the remedy, true medicine or amulet, it is always a tim; there is only the one
759 word to designate it. Some of the natives know how to treat certain illnesses, and people come to consult them, often from far away. One has a medicine against snakes, and he makes it in complete secrecy on a certain day; one knows how to treat colds and bronchitis;
[752] another, dysentery; yet another, sores. The bone-setters are often very skillful, and with the mere pressure of their fingers they can set a dislocated joint or a broken leg; then they enclose it between tightly-bound millet stalks as a splint. These doctors prescribe remedies without resorting to sacrifices or witchcraft. Sometimes they live with their patient to care for him, of course for a fee, especially if the person gets well.

• 751 Smallpox vaccination is performed, but often too late, on individuals who already have the germ. The vaccine is taken from a seriously ill person without any precautionary antiseptic measures. The vaccinated individual is usually made very sick and sometimes dies of

751 it. It is recognized that smallpox does not hit the same place twice (obviously, when it has already killed all those who could be killed), and fear of catching the disease prevents many natives from undergoing the operation. The Administration is rendering great services
744 with its vaccination tours, which will be all the more successful since the experiments carried out by our Fathers some years ago, with tubes of vaccine kindly sent by the Administrator of Ouagadougou, bore excellent results and checked an epidemic which was decimating the
757 population. Smallpox victims are nursed /67/ as carefully as possible. They are laid on a bed of sand which retains heat. When the pocks are ripe, they are punctured with a thorn, and then the patient is rubbed with sand. The eyes are washed with an antiseptic decoction, and the patient gargles frequently with peppered water.

Medicinal herbs, tree leaves, and barks are the basis of all remedies, in the form of infusions or poultices. The study of these medicines would no doubt be of interest to a specialist. But would the natives who hold the secret of their preparation be willing to surrender it?

[572] When a friend is ill, even if he lives far away, the right thing is to
755 visit him, offer him sympathy, and even more appropriately bring him some gifts. The relatives of the sick person consult the sorcerer, for it is necessary to determine the agency that caused the disease. Sorcerers rarely prescribe a medicine. Their role is to point out the part of the body which is afflicted and especially to indicate the spirit who should receive the sacrifice. Another man, who in most cases has nothing to do with witchcraft, knows the medicines. If the patient improves after the prescribed sacrifices have been offered, it means that the sorcerer knows his business well; if not, it means that he has cheated.

758 Every self-respecting sorcerer must prescribe a negative treatment, in the sense of pointing out certain things the patient must not eat. Sometimes goat or chicken flesh is forbidden for the duration of the illness or permanently. Sometimes it is a certain kind of sauce, or millet or bean fritters. On the other hand, since the Mossi eat no eggs, especially not raw, and drink hardly any milk, they sustain the sick with plenty of millet beer and with an unappetizing mush of coarsely ground millet, often mixed with powdered charcoal. Patients have difficulty absorbing such a mixture and occasionally die of
755 starvation. Sometimes the sorcerer also indicates an amulet that

782 755 Then the sacrificer and his assistants eat the victim, but the patient does not partake of it.

782 751 [753] The silent sacrifice, mand'moukou—also called "egg sacrifice," mand'gellé, because an egg is offered—is made in the following circumstances. Some diseases have the dismal faculty of talking like people. They call someone, who answers to his name thinking that a human being has called him. This is sufficient, he will fall ill and die.

The sorcerer decrees that such a disease threatens the village, and that a silent sacrifice is in order. The naba and the elders anxiously delegate one of the men among them to offer the sacrifice. On the following day in the morning, the appointed elder takes an egg, often also a kola nut and special roots, and follows the path which the disease would take if it came to the village. He walks in complete silence. When he reaches a certain point, he brings the egg close to his lips and tells it secretly that a disease threatens the village, and that if the disease tries to follow this path, the egg must stop it. Then he places the egg, kola nut, and roots upon the ground or buries them and retraces his steps. /94/ The egg, a chicken-to-be that cannot yet talk, is chosen as a symbol of the silence that must be observed to ward off the disease.

In the procedure called "bad sacrifice," the victim is not eaten by those present but left on the spot, where it rots or is eaten by vultures and hyenas. Any animal may be offered in this fashion, but the sorcerer alone may decide when the sacrifice is called for. It is usually performed to avert a general misfortune, for example, to ward off a contagious disease that will devour the animal and leave the people alone. The victim is sometimes abandoned alive and driven into the bush.

782 Anything may be offered in sacrifice if the sorcerer says so: kola nuts, cowries, the ashes of certain barks or roots, red stones, the inner fruit of the karite tree, etc. Chickens are the victims most commonly chosen, but sacrifices of goats and sheep are not uncommon. We have already mentioned the guinea hen as the sacrifice preferred by the kikirsi. The nabas are sometimes required to sacrifice cows or donkeys in certain cases. Some nabas, but not all, may sacrifice horses. Finally, even men were sacrificed in the old days. Certain tangamma [563] were greedy for human sacrifices, and the Peul were often used for this purpose. Natives with light skins tending to red, thus closer to [826] the color of ancestral spirits which are said to be white, were sacrificed to these spirits in preference to any others.

000 spilled salt, /99/ four-leaf clovers, hares crossing the roadway, etc., been altogether eradicated by science?

751 No matter how things may stand among us, superstition reigns supreme among the Mossi. Amulets and talismans are greatly valued. Anything may contribute to their manufacture, from the highly prized head of a crowned crane to that of a hawk or a gray heron. Anything may be found in the numerous little bags which hang down a native's neck, from scraps of paper with a few words of Arabic scribbled upon them which Moslem Marabouts distribute in large numbers throughout the Sudan, to cowries or the ashes of every possible and imaginable root. There are amulet bracelets which are worn on the left arm and which protect against seuya sorcerers (see p. 127) if their wearer remembers to push them swiftly up his arm when meeting one of those dreadful soul-eaters. There are bracelets which protect people in fights, and iron rings which act as safeguards against snake bite. Do you want to be welcomed and accepted by the man whose daughter you wish to marry? Wear a certain bracelet on your right arm, and your hopes will come true.

Amulets are worn around the head, neck, arm, or wrist. They are sewn to the cap or to the clothes, attached to the belt, to the pipe, to the staff, anywhere. The list would be endless if we tried to enumerate all the various kinds of amulets. The shoulder blade of a beef fastened to the end of a stick and an iron chain stretched across the soukala entrance protect its inhabitants against a host of misfortunes and unpleasant nocturnal visitations. People consider themselves fortunate to possess such easy protection against the numerous spirits prowling for victims.

787 If you have dogs, watch them carefully. If they are so careless as to lie down or relieve themselves in a basket, or to vomit within the hut, kill them fast or you will die yourself. If your bitch bears only one puppy, kill her pitilessly. When the gray heron flies over the huts shrieking, mothers beat on their jars for fear that their 783 children will get diarrhea. Hunters must not eat koba meat before 789 they engage in their sport, and if they want to gain skill, they must 224 secure certain roots, cook them in water, and wash their hands with the mixture.

777 Sunday is the day of the spirits, the day when koure is held. It is also a good day to build huts. There is nothing special about Monday, but you must be careful about Tuesday, for you never know what it

755 so that my heart may rejoice unceasingly. Then I will come back with another chicken, so that you too may rejoice and continue to protect my wives and my children." Then the sacrifice is concluded. This formula does indicate that the power of the medicine is wholly ascribed to God.

751 Certain superstitious practices that belong in the tim category are used in special cases. For the sake of curiosity, here is what is done when a man has killed a hyena and to protect the huts against lightning.

[828] If a man kills a hyena, he must hastily consult some other native who previously has killed one, or he will become raving mad. The hunter goes to such a man who knows a remedy against this raving madness and takes him a chicken. The man indicates which roots must be obtained, and the hunter gathers them in the bush. He cuts them to pieces and brings them to his doctor who seizes a jar, grabs the chicken, and pulls it toward the roots, then says while pouring water into the ar: "God-tim and his kikiriga, arise, stretch out your hand, and take this water to drink it; take this chicken to eat it, and grant the man who has killed a hyena not to become raving mad." He sacrifices the chicken and pours the blood into the pot. Then he puts half of the roots into the jar and reduces the other half to ashes.

The hunter takes the whole thing home, and for seven days he puts water from the medicine into his millet mush and ashes from the roots into his sauce.

On the seventh day all the family members get together and come with their friends to greet the hunter. They all toss cowries into the gourd which contains the medicine, then proceed to market with much ceremony. The hunter fastens the head of the hyena to the end of a staff and bears it triumphantly to market. He has /102/ the right to take pistachios, beans, millet, cakes, etc., free of charge, anything he wishes. When he is finished taking things, stealing like a hyena, the procession falls into line once more and proceeds to a thick tree near the market. There, the hunter drives his staff into the ground, and everybody starts dancing around him; then they take small sticks and strike him, and he hastily runs away. He is now sure that he will not become raving mad, and what is more from now on he may kill as many hyenas as he wishes without fear.

845 The birth of twins is a good omen when they are of different sex.
787 If they are of the same sex, however, it is a sign of approaching death for the father if they are girls, or for the mother if they are of the male sex. To conjure away this fate, a chicken is sacrificed.

853 Nursing. —When a woman is unable to nurse her child, another woman of the family is called in as a wet nurse, or, more simply, a goat is made to suckle the child. Both cases, however, are quite unusual.

854 Charms for children and tattooing. To protect the child from ill-
751 ness or accidents, a necklace with a charm containing the ashes of various shrubs is placed around its neck about two months after birth.

304 The child is tattooed two and a half or three years after birth. Old women are in charge of this operation. They trace out the lines for the scars on the child's face with a sharp little knife which is bent at the tip. Then they put a mixture of karite butter and powdered charcoal on the wounds to stop the flow of blood.

Tattooing is the same for all the Mossi of Yatenga without distinction of rank. It consists of three vertical scars on each cheek, an oblique one on either side of the face from the corner between the eye and nose to the base of the cheek, and two or three little ones in the middle of the forehead. /255/

854 The very young child. —As in all of the /French/ Sudan, the mother carries the child on her back, wrapped in a cloth that is knotted in front over or under the breasts. She goes thus everywhere, works, pounds millet, etc., with the child on her back.

853 When she wants to suckle it, she brings it to her side, astraddle one hip, and supports it with one arm. She does not put it on the ground unless she is in her hut or teaching it how to walk.

When the child is two or three, it stops nursing and is put on the ground.

857 Until they are four or five, the children run about the compound and around it. At that age, they begin to go out into the bush all by themselves and to play with the other little boys.

Children's games. —We shall deal with this subject under "Mode of Subsistence (hygiene, games, play)."

857 Familial education. —The boys, as soon as they reach the age of
868 five or six, go with their big brother and tend the goats in the bush. They also go and fetch firewood, straw, etc. When they are nine or ten, they begin to handle the daba /a field implement/. At eleven or twelve they are already doing men's work.